

March 14, 2018

Education Committee
Legislative Office Building
Room 3100
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: S.B. 455 An Act Concerning Minority Teacher Recruitment and Retention

On behalf of TNTP, a national non-profit organization that partners with school systems to help them achieve their goals for students, I appreciate the opportunity to offer written testimony in support of S.B. 455.

TNTP's mission is to end educational inequality by providing excellent teachers to the students who need them most and by advancing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching in every classroom. We prioritize the work we do because of the overwhelming evidence that shows excellent teachers can put even students facing considerable challenges on track for success. Research shows that highly effective teachers have a lifelong impact on students, boosting college attendance and future earnings. But students of color, students from low-income families, students with special educational needs, and students who are English language learners—all of whom bring tremendous gifts to their classrooms, but who are too often disadvantaged in our current education system—are least likely to get access to excellent teachers.

We believe this bill has the potential to address these inequities by significantly improving minority teacher recruitment, and we urge the Committee to move it forward.

Teacher Diversity

Research shows that while all students benefit from exposure to teachers from diverse backgrounds, students of color get an especially big boost from teachers of their own race. Using data from North Carolina, Gershenson et al. (2017) found that black students who had a black teacher even once in grades 3, 4, or 5 were 50 percent less likely to drop out of school than black students who did not during the same grades. A growing body of research reveals that non-black teachers of black students have significantly lower expectations for students than do black teachers.¹ Other studies show that students of color who have teachers of the same race are more likely to be referred to gifted programs,² less likely to be suspended, and more likely to achieve at higher levels.³

Despite this mounting evidence about the importance of teacher diversity, the racial disparity between students and the teacher workforce is large, and is likely to keep growing: more than half of K-12 students are not white compared

¹ Gershenson, S., Hart, C. M. D., Lindsay, C. A., & Papageorge, N. (2017, March). Long-run dynamics and dosage effects of student-teacher demographic mismatch. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society of Research on Educational Effectiveness, Washington, D. C.

² Grissom, J., Rodriguez, L., and Kern, E. (2017). Teacher and Principal Diversity and the Representation of Students of Color in Gifted Programs: Evidence from National Data. *The Elementary School Journal*, 117:3, 396-422.

³ Egalite, E.J., Kisida, B., Winters, M.A. (2014). Representation in the classroom: The effect of own-race/ethnicity teacher assignment on student achievement. Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper Series 14 (07);

Gershenson, S., Holt, S. B., & Papageorge, N. W. (2016). Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations. *Economics of Education Review*, 52, 209-224.

to about one in five teachers.⁴ In Connecticut, the difference between the percentage of nonwhite students, 38%, and the percentage of nonwhite teachers, 7%, is one of the largest in the country.⁵ This represents a significant missed opportunity to help improve student achievement across the state, especially among students of color.

Fortunately, we know that progress can be made by making teacher diversity a clear priority. For example, we helped operate The New York City Teaching Fellows, one of the biggest teacher training programs in the country, where we recruited candidate pools with more than 60 percent people of color by explicitly setting goals for enrollment, completion and placement, and by formulating strategies at each step. We believe the comprehensive efforts required by Section 1 of this bill will enable Connecticut to identify and implement best practices around recruitment, certification and retention to become a leader in ensuring kids have access to a diverse pool of teacher talent from which they will all benefit.

Sincerely,



Daniel Weisberg
Chief Executive Officer

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, Washington, D.C. 2016. Retrieved March 13, 2018 from <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/racial-diversity/state-racial-diversity-workforce.pdf>.

⁵ Boser, U. (2014). Teacher diversity revisited: A new state-by-state analysis. Center for American Progress. Retrieved March 13, 2018 from <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/TeacherDiversity.pdf>.